

**Submission  
No 146**

## **COERCIVE CONTROL IN DOMESTIC RELATIONSHIPS**

**Organisation:** Police Scotland

**Date Received:** 25 February 2021

Partially  
Confidential



**BRIEFING PAPER**

<b>FOR INFORMATION AND CONSIDERATION</b>			
Disclosable under FOISA 2002		<b>No</b>	
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**Information to assist in response to NSW Government Discussion Paper – Coercive control**

Domestic abuse accounts for almost one quarter of violent crime in Scotland. It leaves countless victims in constant fear. Police Scotland responds to one domestic abuse call every 9 minutes but we know this is only a fraction of the abuse occurring in our communities - the truth is a much darker and sinister picture.

Domestic abuse is the greatest single demand on operational policing, taking up at least 20% of officers' time. The abuse isn't just physical – it can be verbal, sexual, psychological or financial abuse which might amount to criminal conduct and which takes place within the context of a relationship.

The people in that relationship don't need to be married or in a civil partnership, they can be co-habiting or be ex-partners living apart. Unlike other parts of the UK such as England and Wales, Scotland does not consider abuse committed in other familial relationships as domestic abuse. For example, abuse committed by parents on their children, between siblings or adult children as carers for a relative will be dealt with within the existing multi-agency public protection frameworks and/or legislation such as Child Protection, Adult Support and Protection, Anti-Social Behaviour or civil remedy.

The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 (DASA) was enacted on 1 April 2019 and substantively criminalised coercive and controlling behaviours for the first time in Scotland. DASA 2018 gave Police Scotland the opportunity to enrich policing practices for responding effectively to coercive and controlling behaviours which had long been recognised as a significant factor of domestic abuse alongside other abuse and violence.

A pioneering training programme 'Domestic Abuse Matters (Scotland)' was designed to support officers and staff in the roll out of the Act. Guidance was provided on practical issues such as evidence gathering and reporting of coercive and controlling behaviours. The training was designed to advance staff and officers' knowledge of the dynamics of power and control in abusive relationships and to tackle the myths and misconceptions, some of which are still common in our communities.

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The training programme, entitled Domestic Abuse Matters (Scotland) – DAM(S) commenced in November 2018 and provided officers and staff with training and support so that they fully understood what the changes meant for them and how they could make best use of the new powers to protect victims and bring offenders to justice.

The training ensured that they understood the dynamics of different types of domestic abuse, particularly coercive control, so that they can recognise it in their day to day duties and take effective action to prevent further occurrence.

Police Scotland received significant ([REDACTED]) funding from the Scottish Government to develop and implement the training package with our partners Safelives, who are a UK national charity committed to ending domestic abuse and a consortium of other partners including statutory and non-statutory service providers. This enabled us to commit to delivering face to face training for more than 14,000 officers and staff across the organisation, within the following areas:

- 13 Local Policing Divisions, officers up to and including the rank of Chief Inspector
- Public Enquiry and Support Assistants
- Contact, Command and Control Division officers and staff, up to and including the rank of Inspector or equivalent.
- Criminal Justice Division

An e-learning package was also created for all officers and staff (irrespective of role) to improve their understanding of Domestic Abuse and cover all key areas of the new legislation. It was made universally accessible across the organisation, on our online learning platform and was completed by more than 21,000 officers and staff which is over 90% of our current workforce.

The evaluation of the DAM(S) training (attached) was published in September 2020 and provides constructive feedback which will inform future programme development and delivery.

[REDACTED ATTACHMENT]

The Domestic Abuse pages within the Police Scotland intranet site which is universally accessible across the organisation was also key to ensuring consistent and meaningful communication/information sharing was in place to support the national communications strategy on the implementation of DASA. The pages were regularly updated to reflect feedback from issues raised in the training environment, practical application of DASA and from relevant partners. Regular information sharing with criminal justice partners including the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) also ensured this information remained current and responsive.

Examples of this are illustrated by the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) from the DASA page (attached) which also address some of the issues raised in the NSW discussion paper.

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Where specific issues warranted bespoke resolutions such as the practical application of DASA 2018 in crime recording (attached), custom training was designed and uploaded on to the intranet.

[REDACTED ATTACHMENT]

There are contractual limitations that prevent us sharing the comprehensive training materials from DAM(S) however more information can be sought from our key partner Safelives at <https://safelives.org.uk/>

For more information on DASA 2018, please see <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2018/5/contents/enacted>

Key statistics in 2019-20,

- 1681 DASA crimes were recorded by Police Scotland
- 69% detection rate (1158 crimes)
- 1,065 DASA charges were reported by COPFS
- DASA accounted for 3.5% of all domestic abuse charges
- [REDACTED]
- A child aggravation was recorded against 251 (24%) of the DASA charges reported
- [REDACTED]
- 96% (1,023) of the DASA charges reported were in cases where the accused was male
- 58,250 DA incidents were attended by Police Scotland
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

So far in 20/21 (until end of Nov 20)

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]